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THE HOLY SPIRIT
AND
THE CHURCH'S TRADITION

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by

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CHAPTER ONE

"THE TRADITION OF MEN" - RECONSIDERATION

The members of the Consultation are agreed that there is a historic Christian Tradition....Tradition cannot simply be equated with "the traditions of men"--teachings and practices which obscure or corrupt rather than express the revelation to which the Scriptures witness. By Tradition we understand the whole life of the Church, ever guided and nourished by the Holy Spirit, and expressed in its worship, witness, way of life, and its order....In such a sense, the Christian Tradition antedated the formation of the New Testament canon.¹

The statements above are not part of a schema prepared for the recent session of the Second Vatican Council, but are taken from a report on "Tradition and Scripture" prepared by the Consultation on Church Union, a group of representatives of six American Protestant churches meeting at Oberlin, Ohio, in March 1963. The group included not only members of the Protestant Episcopal Church, who might be expected to make such statements, but also representatives of the United Church of Christ, the Evangelical United Brethren, and the Christian, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches. Such a surprising agreement among these churches on the subject of tradition and Scripture (it would certainly shock a large portion of their membership) provides first-hand evidence of the profound re-evaluation of the nature of the Scriptures lately going on in all sections of the Church.²

The sources of this re-evaluation are many and reach far back, even including the rise of historical consciousness in the eighteenth

century and the application of the historical and literary methods of criticism to the Bible. In the widest sense we may include the breakup of European Christendom, the container of the divided Christian churches, and the consequent search by Christians for some form of unity among themselves as causes of the changed attitude toward Scripture. Leaving aside more distant historical causes, we can divide the reasons for the current reassessment of Scripture in relation to tradition and the Church into three chief areas: 1) the development of historical criticism, 2) the revival of Biblical and patristic studies and 3) the influence of the ecumenical movement. It is important to see the role each of these reasons has played.

Before the rise of historical criticism, both Roman Catholics and orthodox Protestants regarded the canon of Scripture as an inviolable whole every part of which was equally inspired and authoritative, whatever the differences in the definition of that authority among the two groups. But historical criticism severed the unbroken authority of the canon and, by pointing out internal inconsistencies and factual discrepancies, brought its integrity into question. If the canon as a whole did not provide reliable information about the events of the first century of the Christian era, then historical criticism was prepared to avail itself of other means. By analysis of the documents it attempted to get behind them and discover the historical figure of Jesus apart from the testimony of the documents themselves, or at least apart from what were considered the scientifically erroneous aspects of those documents.

The effort, as originally understood, failed. No portrayal of Jesus by any nineteenth century Biblical critic was long able to withstand the dissolving fires of criticism. Because of the lack of other evidence and the paucity of sources, it was apparently impossible on the basis of historical methodology to substitute anything for the portrait of Jesus bequeathed us by the primitive apostolic Church. The very writers who pushed the historical inquiry furthest were obliged by fidelity to their method to admit their failure. This admission of failure was the beginning of a way out of the impasse, for it led to a new analysis of the nature of the Biblical documents, that is, to formgeschichte, form criticism. The Biblical documents purport to give information about historical events, but criticism showed them unusually elusive and enigmatic. By breaking the narratives into their component parts, the various literary forms, form criticism was able to show in what way the Biblical documents could be considered history and when other factors had to be accounted for. In the process, formgeschichte revolutionized our understanding of the Bible, sounding the death knell for all rationalizing attempts to make it a text book of doctrines about God and nature. The profusion of prophetic, poetic, historical and literary forms in the Bible was far richer than the traditional theories took account of.

Though, like historical criticism, form criticism ignored the strict limits of the canon, freely adducing the evidence of other Christian, Jewish and pagan documents, it nevertheless had the effect of centering attention on the canon again. During the first period of historical criticism, the existence of the canon as such was often thought irrelevant; since it was the result of a later ecclesiastical

decisions, its study belonged to Church history. Form criticism, however, discovered the hand of the Church in the formation and preservation of the Scriptures from the beginning. More important, there appeared to be a relatively long and complex oral tradition by which historical events and their interpretation were preserved before being committed to writing. The Church was seen to be the deliverer and recipient of this oral tradition, and Scripture the crystallized, written core of it. Consequently, Biblical scholars could no longer make a separation between Church and Scripture but were compelled by historical fact to study the two together. Now the history of the canon of Scripture is no longer studied by simply referring to the decisions of councils and bishops; it is studied in organic connection with the Church's proclamation and handing on of the gospel and the development of institutions for that purpose.

The rise of historical consciousness has enabled us to escape from the natural error of interpreting the life of the early Church after the analogy of the life of the Church in our present era. Formerly there was an unconscious tendency among Biblical scholars to envision the gospel proclamation of the primitive Church in the form of the rather static and fundamentalist recitation of Scripture which often characterized the preaching of Protestant orthodoxy. In fact the preaching of the earliest Church, so far as we can reconstruct it, was not a repetition of unchanging oracles, but the living deliverance of a living tradition with a timely, even ad hoc, interpretation of what for them were Scriptures, the Septuagint. If this kind of living, changing development is true of the oral tradition, Biblical studies have shown that such is also true of the Scripture itself. The New

Testament is not by any means a handbook of the doctrines of the apostles; it is rather the record of the developing consciousness of the faith of the Church of the apostles. The Scripture is a representation of the oral tradition at several different stages and in several different places and thus, as might be expected, shows development and variation of expression within itself.

This development is even more obvious in the Old Testament than in the New. The priestly fiction of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch hardly conceals the fact that the first five books of the Hebrew scriptures contain four distinct re-interpretations of the oral tradition of Israel's history. Scripture itself is pre-occupied with the continuous handing on of the constitutive traditions of Israel within the common life of that people. The tendency of contemporary Western theology both Roman and Protestant to emphasize the notion of the Church as the body of Christ makes us more prone to accept this organic understanding of tradition. Scripture is seen to function within this organism as a means of interpretation of its life and as an instrument of the continuity of that life.

Within the Bible itself God's Word often becomes clear only in the form of re-interpretation in the light of later events of what happened in the past.³

The importance of re-interpretation becomes apparent, not only in the analysis of the Pentateuch or of the canon of the four gospels, but in what is really the most far-reaching interpretation of the tradition of Israel--the claim of the early Christians, recorded for us in the New Testament, that the thousand-year scriptural tradition of Israel is a promise and a prophecy now fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth.

Increasingly the churches of the Reformation have begun to recognize that the denial of tradition is impossible. On the basis of the true Christian teaching contained in the Scriptures, the Reformers denied the validity of certain medieval corruptions and additions to the tradition. They were right in doing so, but their general rejection of tradition itself and the nature of their appeal to Scripture set dangerous precedents for the future. It would be wrong in all this to maintain that the Reformers denied all meaning to tradition.⁴ For Luther and Calvin, the Church is constituted by a tradition of the true proclamation of the Word of God and the right celebration of the sacraments. They went astray in not seeing the actual historical continuity of this tradition in the Church even amid the corruptions of their time. Despite some movement on the part of Luther toward a more kerygmatic idea of the gospel, the Reformers like their contemporaries were by and large convinced that they could find revelation in the Scriptures in the sense of absolute and unchanging truths. This revelation once delivered contained the same meaning for every age, so that what was needed was a return to the true doctrine of the Bible before it had become corrupted by later accretions.

The Biblicist tendency which became solidified in Protestant orthodoxy was only intensified by the romanticism and interest in primitive culture displayed by the nineteenth century. The liberal theologians broke with the fundamentalism but not with the basic Biblicism of their conservative opponents; they still believed that if one could recover the original message of the prophets and of Jesus

it could be applied immediately to the contemporary situation. Interestingly enough they found this original message to be strikingly similar to the ethical ideals of liberal Western philosophy; by their reductionist approach, men like Harnack eliminated all else from the core of the Biblical witness. It is to the credit of Biblical scholarship, however, that it was able to discover the inadequacies of the liberal ideal, though still without questioning the basic primitivist assumption that the original deposit of faith contained readily graspable answers for present-day Christians. Critics of the liberal ideal simply pushed the liberal method one step further.

What emerged out of the studies of the religions-geschichtliche Schule was a new picture of the men, the ideas, and the institutions of biblical history. Those elements and traits, which did strike modern man as crude, primitive, cultic, and even magical, were now given equal and often greater emphasis than those which happened to appeal to enlightened Western taste. The "peril of modernizing Jesus"--to use Henry J. Cadbury's phrase--was fully recognised. Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer made a forceful plea for a most abstruse and appalling eschatology as the actual setting for Jesus and his followers; H. Gunkel, H. Gressmann, and S. Mowinkel placed the OT back in the matrix of Near Eastern myth and cult. Johannes Pedersen applied V. Groenbech's studies of human self-understanding in old Nordic religion to an extensive study of OT anthropology, where cherished distinctions between soul and body, magic and religion, cult and ethics, individual and collective, were thoroughly intermingled and lost much of their meaning. It became a scholarly ideal to creep out of one's Western and twentieth-century skin and identify oneself with the feelings and thought-patterns of the past.²

The history of religion school succeeded in drastically emphasizing our separation from the world of the Bible by two thousand years of history. In so doing these scholars made it clear that the Christian needed a method of applying the Biblical witness to his own

situation and that this method must be far more complex than anyone had thought since the rejection of the old fourfold medieval scheme of exegesis. What was needed was an adequate hermeneutic. To put it another way, Protestant scholars began to recognize for the first time the process of the handing over and handing on of the message. Tradition or paradosis was seen as in fact prior to the written record and still necessary for the passing on of that record throughout history.

The actual course of history demonstrated the inevitability of tradition.⁶ First, continental Protestantism diverged into several streams, Reformed, Lutheran and Anglican, each with its own peculiarities; the proliferation of sects from the eighteenth century onwards, especially in England and America, made it apparent, once these groups emerged from isolation, that traditions of how the Scripture was received and passed on were of crucial importance. In the common parlance of the United States we often talk of "worshipping according to the Presbyterian tradition" or of "building a church in the traditional colonial style."

We have already stated that Biblical studies proved that an oral tradition was prior to the Scriptures and that the Bible itself records stages in the development of this oral tradition. But there is still another result of accurate Biblical study. The theology of the Reformers as well as of the later Fundamentalists is not simply a restatement of the words of the Biblical documents but depends on an ecclesiastical tradition including the decrees of councils and the writings of the Fathers. The doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation, constantly assumed by the Reformers, are nowhere

explicitly stated in Scripture. The assumption of all reformed theology, usually tacit (or admitted, in the case of the Anglicans), was the appeal to the first centuries of the Church and the writings of the Fathers.

The modern recognition of the role of tradition cannot be according to old authoritarian notions of the Church's teaching office.⁷ The Church's preaching must involve more than just formulaic repetition. The recent study of the process of the canonization of the Biblical books has lent support to this assertion. The canon developed in a much more unconscious way than was formerly thought. The decisions of bishops and councils were really but the official recognition of an already existing list of received writings. The criteria of a book's acceptance were more practical than any theory of the inspiration of the books: a direct or indirect claim to apostolic authorship, agreement with orthodox doctrine and wide usage in the various churches.⁸ Under the old notion of inspiration, understood in a mechanistic way, the canon was an unchallengeable rule. Once historiography had shown that the same principles of historical tradition active in the crystallization of the Biblical writings operated also in the formation of the canon, theology realized its need for an entirely different historical, non-authoritarian approach to the canon.

So far we have dealt with only the first of the three influences which make for a re-evaluation of the relationships between Scripture and tradition in the Church--the rise of historical criticism, particularly as it affects the Protestant churches. The second of these influences, the revival of patristic studies, though of some significance among Protestants, has been most far-reaching in

its effect on Roman Catholic theologians. Increasingly Roman scholars, men like J. Danielou, Y. Congar and G. Tavard, have been recognizing and admitting the inadequacies of the late medieval view of the dichotomy between Scripture and tradition crystallized in the theologies and catechisms of the post-Tridentine divines. Convinced by their studies of the Fathers of the intimate connection between Scripture and tradition, these scholars constantly adduce patristic support for their conclusions. Scripture and tradition are one; Scripture is known through tradition. In this regard, perhaps Tavard goes too far in wanting to insist that all Fathers despite differences in emphasis agreed on the identity of Scripture and tradition.⁹ The Alexandrians, Clement and Origen, already appealed to a secret oral tradition providing important material not available in the written deposit.

The recovery of patristic views on Scripture and tradition has led to a re-examination of later statements on the subject, and especially the decrees of the Council of Trent, to see if they could be reconciled with the newly appreciated patristic view. Tavard shows that the idea of a split between Scripture and tradition arose in medieval times out of a need to justify with primitive apostolic support certain practices and opinions common in the Church at that time. The idea of tradition as a source of doctrine distinct from Scripture was perpetuated in the post-Reformation period by the teachings and catechisms of men like Robert Bellarmine, Peter Canisius and Melchior Cano. This belief is a permitted, and until recently was the common, opinion on the matter in the Roman Church.

An examination of the Tridentine decree, however, will show that there is no basis for such an opinion in the actual wording employed

by the Council fathers:

the purity itself of the Gospel is preserved in the Church, which promised before through the Prophets in the Holy Scriptures our Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God first promulgated with His own mouth, and then commanded "to be preached" by His apostles "to every creature" as the source of every saving truth and of instruction in morals, and [the Synod] clearly perceiving that this truth and instruction are contained in the written books and in the unwritten traditions, which have been received by the apostles from the mouth of Christ Himself, or from the apostles themselves, at the dictation of the Holy Spirit, have come down even to us, transmitted as it were from hand to hand, [the Synod] following the examples of the orthodox Fathers, receives and holds in veneration with an equal affection of piety and reverence all the books both of the Old and of the New Testament, since one God is the author of both, and also the traditions themselves, those that appertain both to faith and to morals, as having been dictated either by Christ's own word of mouth, or by the Holy Spirit, and preserved in the Catholic Church by a continuous succession.¹⁰

Clearly Trent maintains only one source of doctrine, that is, the Gospel, contained, says the Council, "in the written books and in the unwritten traditions." That the Council did not mean by this statement two separate or different sources is shown by its specific rejection of an earlier draft decree in which the Gospel was said to be contained "partly" in the written books and "partly" in the unwritten traditions--"partim...partim." The exact significance of the rejection of the draft is somewhat disputed. G. Tavard believes that the Council meant to assert that Scripture and tradition were to be held together as simply two forms of the very same teaching.¹¹ J. Geiselman thinks the Council used the neutral word "et" instead of "partim-partim" to avoid making any decision about the issue, leaving it to a later period to clarify its statement.¹² In any case, though the positive teaching

of Trent may be doubtful, by rejecting "partim-partim" it left the way open for a recovery of patristic views and a rapprochement with the Protestants.

It is interesting to notice the influence of certain Anglican divines in the new understanding of Trent. William Palmer, in a book published in 1838, maintained that the Council of Trent did not teach a two-source theory of revelation but could actually be reconciled with the Anglican teaching in Article VI of the Thirty-Nine Articles.¹³ John Henry Newman, who was later to uphold such a view in Tract XC, continued to teach it during his Roman period.¹⁴

The later teachings of the first Vatican Council and of the popes have in no way altered the decree of Trent, or gone beyond it in defining the relation of Scripture and tradition. The Vatican Council decree on the matter (Denzinger 1787) actually quoted the relevant passage from Trent asserting that the revelation is contained "in the written books and in the unwritten traditions." After quoting Trent, Vatican I simply went on to reaffirm the inerrancy and inspiration of the Scripture and the necessity of interpretation according to the unanimous agreement of the Fathers. Likewise, Leo XIII's encyclical, "Providentissimus Deus" (Denzinger 1941-53), went no further than Vatican I on the matter of Scripture and tradition and again referring to Trent as authoritative. We shall deal with the views of the Vatican Council and the popes on the matter of inspiration, authorship and inerrancy in a later chapter.

In many ways the official teachings of the Roman Church represent an authoritarian, ahistorical and external notion of the Scriptures, although Pius XII's encyclical, "Divino Afflante Spiritu," issued in

1943, signifies a real change and a positive outlook on the contribution of historical criticism. But Biblical and patristic scholars, while not contradicting official teaching, have approached their studies from entirely new points of view. Instead of seeing the Bible simply as a source book for doctrine, a deposit of revealed truths, they now recognize that it must be seen against its historical and cultural background. Written by and for the Church, the Bible reveals its nature when seen as the record of the living faith of the Church.¹⁵

In the face of the rigid theories of inspiration promulgated by the official documents, it has been possible for some scholars, particularly, as we shall see later, Karl Rahner, to develop a more supple, less mechanical, statement of scriptural inspiration. Much of the work of these scholars must be spent seeking to reconcile their conclusions with the official statements and skirting the obstacles erected by the Papal Biblical Commission. "Divino Afflante Spiritu" provided a strong encouragement to make the effort.

Perhaps the most significant change of emphasis occurs in regard to the understanding of the Church's magisterium. In the past the magisterium, the teaching office of the Church, has been spoken of in quasi-juridical terms, as if its exclusive function were papal and conciliar refutation of heresies. Now it is becoming clearer that the basis of the Church's magisterium is the evangelical call to preach the gospel and to teach all nations. The chief way the Church exercises its magisterium is not in doctrinal definition but in the preaching of the Word. It is an instrument of the handing over of the Gospel; the magisterium is the means by which the faith is traditioned. It includes, therefore, preaching, liturgy and catechesis

as well as doctrinal definitions. Moreover, to be truly received the tradition must really be handed over and be appropriated. To be received and appropriated, the tradition must be intelligible. The ecclesia docens must do more than promulgate dogma; it must undertake an extensive, complex work of communication.

In all this there is of course no abandonment of the official doctrine of an infallibility belonging to the Church and vested in the pope. Yet in practice the stark decree of infallibility is somewhat mitigated. Papal infallibility exists only within the whole Church and does not include the power popularly attributed to it to regulate the faith but simply to define what is the actual faith held by the Church. Scripture itself limits the power of the infallible Church by providing the inalienable record of the revelation which it must interpret. The hierarchy is responsible to declare the authoritative interpretation of Scripture to be held by the whole Church, but teachers and scholars have the right and the ability to tell the hierarchy what is actually in the Scriptures.

Si la hiérarchie est "juge de la foi", c'est seulement de la croyance des fidèles, non du dépôt de la foi qui, connu par elle grâce à ses monuments, s'impose à elle et lie son jugement comme un contenu détermine une forme.¹⁶

Infallibility is considered less as a legal power residing in the papal office and more in relation to the finality and sufficiency of God's action in Christ.

Following our documents, the Apostolic See must be called the center of unity, life, charity, not because a canonical relationship can by itself communicate holiness, but because the Lord has attached his promises to a visible society.¹⁷

Infallibility, not to be claimed as the proud possession of the Church, is part of the *συγκατάθεσις* of God revealed in the Incarnation of his

Son. Certainly this attitude is a great step forward, even if a non-Roman Catholic must question the radically realized eschatology implied in this viewpoint which tends to deny any significance to the post-apostolic history of the Church.

In its recovery of Scripture, modern Roman theology insists on two emphases. First, Scripture is the norm and criterion of tradition. Tradition contrary to Scripture cannot be a true tradition because it is not a tradition of the Word, which is witnessed to for us not in an imagined oral tradition but in the handing on of the written record. Nothing of the oral tradition could have survived apart from the canon of Scripture.

The apostolic word proclaimed by a living voice
(das lebendig verkündigte apostolische Wort)
is the form in which the gospel of Christ
is to speak to us; which means that the
apostolic kerygma, the apostolic paradosis,
transmits the gospel in its entirety.¹⁸

The Scripture is sufficient for doctrine provided it is interpreted after the analogy of faith; the canon cannot be disregarded, for it safeguards and contains at least implicitly all necessary doctrine. Secondly, current Roman theology insists that the Scripture and the Church must always be held together. Scripture and tradition find their unity in the Church, for there Scripture is handed on. There alone is it rightly read and interpreted, for Scripture cannot be fully understood without taking into account the Church for which it was written and which it constantly implies.

La tradition ainsi entendue n'est pas seulement un certain dépôt de vérités ou d'énoncés, mais aussi et même d'abord un ensemble de réalités, celles qui constituent comme le trésor de la Nouvelle Alliance, l'ensemble des moyens aptes à susciter et à nourrir la vie dans le Christ.¹⁹

On the basis of all the developments we have examined it is easy to see there now exists some real possibility of agreement not only informally but even more officially between Protestant and Roman Catholic scholars on the question of Scripture and tradition in the Church. Nevertheless there are a number of basic difficulties remaining which we shall only summarize at this point to deal with them in more detail in our concluding chapter. Geiselmann lists three basic outstanding differences between Roman and Protestant scholars: 1) to what extent there is an authoritative interpretation of Scripture by the teaching office of the Church binding on all the members; 2) to what extent exegesis must accord with the traditional ecclesiastical interpretation; 3) whether there is a "development" of the data of Scripture in the history of their interpretation by the Church.²⁰ To these three disputed issues, one might add two others which are really hangovers from an earlier period. There is still a tendency, in spite of recent progress, to regard the Scripture as containing, even if only implicitly, truths and doctrines rather than the record of a history. In addition, Scripture is still held up as an authority in a sense made impossible by the application of a scientific criticism which judges Scripture from the vantage point of its own independent methodology. Roman Biblical scholarship has a lot of catching up to do. It seems quite reluctant to recognize the real revolution initiated by form criticism.

In all that has been said up till now, the importance of the ecumenical movement (the third influence on the modern consideration of Scripture and tradition mentioned above) has been apparent. Even in the periods of deepest Christian division, the churches have not

formed their theologies totally without regard to each other. We have already had occasion to notice how Anglican scholars influenced the modern Roman re-interpretation of the Council of Trent. Yet only relatively recently have the various divided traditions recognized the necessity of studying other traditions for other than polemical purposes. The renewed communication of the Christian West, both papalist and Protestant, with the Orthodox East has above all aided in the movement toward recovering the wholeness of tradition. The presence of the Orthodox at Edinburgh in 1937 was in large measure responsible for positive recognition given tradition by the Edinburgh Faith and Order Report and in the Lund Report on Ways of Worship, issued in 1951. Orthodoxy has much to teach the Western churches because it has been able to communicate the substance of the Christian tradition less impaired by the legalism and reductionism of the Roman and Protestant West. "The Eastern Orthodox Church can be called the Church of Tradition. Tradition is quite simply the Church in its ongoing life."²¹

CHAPTER TWO

"ALL SCRIPTURE IS INSPIRED BY GOD" - THE INSPIRED WORD

According to the author of the Second Epistle to Timothy, *πάντα γραφὴ θεόπνευστος* (II Tim. 3:16); that text has provided the theme for much of the discussion of Scripture which has gone on in the Church in the past two millennia. The category of inspiration persists as a way of describing and explaining the uniqueness and authority of Scripture, as somehow depending on the work of God's Spirit. The current re-examination of Scripture in the light of the Church's tradition suggests that the whole notion of inspiration should be reconsidered and reformulated. In what follows we shall examine three traditional forms in which a theory of inspiration is held--the Roman, the orthodox Protestant and the liberal--and attempt to trace their development and demonstrate their inadequacies.

A doctrine of inspiration is the basis on which the Roman Church holds firmly to the infallible authority and inerrancy of the Scriptures. This inerrancy applies unequivocally to the literal sense of the written word, as Thomas Aquinas emphasized against those who would ignore the literal sense in their spiritual exegesis. The encyclical "Divino Afflante Spiritu" (1943) reaffirmed the importance of first attending to the literal meaning before going on to the transferred or spiritual sense. Moreover, according

to the encyclical, whatever spiritual sense is culled from Scripture must be only that meaning inspired by God:

So the exegete, just as he should find and expound the so-called literal significance of the words, which the sacred writer intended and expressed, so also he should the spiritual significance, provided it can be rightly established that it was given by God. For God alone could know this spiritual significance and reveal it to us.¹

The literal sense cannot be false because it is given by God. Yet in practice Roman Catholic exegesis has largely been saved by its tradition of interpretation from the worst absurdities of literalism. In the Middle Ages there was the fourfold system of the literal, allegorical, tropological and anagogical interpretation of the text. More recently, in the same encyclical quoted above, the exegete is reminded of his responsibility constantly to relate his literal interpretation to the decisions of the Church's magisterium on faith and morals, to the analogy of faith and to the consensus of the Fathers.

According to the decrees of the Council of Florence inspiration is the mode by which God is author of the Scriptures.

[The Council] professes one and the same God as the author of the Old and New Testament, that is, of the Law and the Prophets and the Gospel, since the saints of both Testaments have spoken with the inspiration of the same Holy Spirit, whose books, which are contained under² the following titles, it accepts and venerates.

The first Vatican Council and Leo XIII's encyclical "Providentissimus Deus" restated the divine authorship of Scripture in a clarified and extended form. The encyclical "Spiritus Paraclitus" again strongly insisted that this divine authorship means the complete inerrancy of Scripture. Inspiration is not limited to dogmatic and

moral teachings of Scripture or to the specifically didactic statements of the authors. This view, held by some liberal and modernist scholars in the nineteenth century, was specifically condemned by "Providentissimus Deus":

it would be entirely wrong either to confine inspiration only to some parts of Sacred Scripture, or to concede that the sacred author himself has erred....The books, all and entire, which the Church accepts as sacred and canonical, with all their parts, have been written at the dictation of the Holy Spirit.³

Inspiration is posited of all books and all parts of books; all those who took any part in the writing or editing were inspired. Inspiration of the Scriptures is to be understood as part of the divine condescension which makes use of human faculties as its instruments without destroying their humanness. This divine condescension extends to every aspect of Scripture except that of formal error, which, according to the dogmatic statements, is not possible because it is not compatible with the divine authorship. Error can never be predicated of God.

Though it is affirmed that the Scriptures must be attributed wholly to God as principal cause, an attempt is made to preserve the integrity and freedom of the human author. Inspiration works through the full consciousness of the human writer who is the instrument of God as moving agent. Inspiration is not to be confused with revelation as if the words of Scripture were dictated in a material fashion either externally or internally to the writer.

Therefore, it matters not at all that the Holy Spirit took men as instruments for the writing, as if anything false might have slipped, not indeed from the first Author, but from the

inspired writers. For, by supernatural power He so roused and moved them to write, He stood so near them, that they rightly grasped in mind all those things, and those only, which He Himself ordered, and willed faithfully to write them down, and expressed them properly with infallible truth; otherwise, He Himself would not be the author of all Sacred Scripture.⁴

Some few concessions are made officially to the requirements of scientific scholarship. Textual discrepancies are sometimes admitted, but their presence is squared with the claim to inerrancy by the notion of a hypothetically perfect original text representing what was actually inspired by the Holy Spirit. It is also conceded that not the Vulgate but only the original manuscripts were inspired. The Council of Trent had declared the Vulgate translation as "authentic." In "Divino Afflante Spiritu," Pius XII explained that this did not mean inspired or perfect but merely that the Vulgate was sufficiently accurate for use in the Church. Such use did not preclude but rather required reference to the original texts. The Vulgate's authority is juridical rather than critical.⁵

The woodenness and externality of the official Roman statement of the inspiration of Scripture prevent it from providing a creative basis for interpretation. The main purpose and result of the theory is to preserve the dogmatic inerrancy of Scripture. It gives little help for understanding the true origin, development and witness of the Biblical books; indeed the theory militates against any thorough examination of the writings in their context. One wonders why the important principle of divine condescension cannot be extended to apply to human error in the production of the writings. One might hope above all from the Roman Church, with its view of the

Spirit guiding and indwelling the whole Church, a more balanced doctrine of scriptural inspiration, but in fact the inspired Scriptures are often just as much isolated from the whole of the Spirit's work as they commonly are in Protestant Orthodoxy. We shall return later to Karl Rahner's decidedly new re-interpretation of the official statements on inspiration.

The sixteenth-century Reformers looked for a ground of authority stronger and more reliable than the spiritually impaired authority of a corrupt Church and papacy. They found this authority in the Scriptures, whose primal importance was never doubted in the Church. In one sense, then, the Reformers were not doing anything new in exalting the Scriptures; only when they were forced in controversy to claim the backing of Scripture over against the Church hierarchy, did the Scriptures become isolated from the rest of Christian tradition. When the medieval Church lost its vitality and became corrupt, the Reformers seized on the Scriptures, the written witness of the apostolic Church, as the constitution of a true Christianity, just as in a similar situation in the sixth century B.C. Josiah had employed Deuteronomy as the law-book of a true Israel.⁶

Martin Luther's understanding of Scripture encompasses three distinctions: a distinction between Scripture and things invented by the Church, a distinction between accepting the Scripture on authority and being inwardly persuaded of its truth, a distinction between the letter of Scripture and the living Word of God.

It was natural that Luther should make much of the distinction between the contents of Scripture and the later traditions of the Church; Scripture was the authority he appealed to in his criticism

of the contemporary medieval Church. Luther had little use for the authority of councils and fathers, for that authority was represented to him only too clearly by the abortive Fifth Lateran Council (1512-17), whose failure to reform the Church led to despair among men of a reforming mind. As Luther saw it, the councils and the fathers received no new revelation from the Holy Spirit but were dependent on Scripture for their teaching. From this assertion Luther draws some further conclusions which will prove dangerous for the future. Denying any real inspiration to the ongoing life of the Church represented by the fathers and the councils, he goes on to claim that the Scriptures created the Church:

If the Holy Scriptures had not made and preserved the Church, it would not have remained long because of the councils and fathers.⁷

In Luther's thought this separation of Scripture from its traditional matrix was combined with a second emphasis. As God's word, the Scripture had authority of itself and did not need any external ecclesiastical proof of its authenticity. Indeed no external proof could convince a man of the truth of the Scripture; he must decide for himself that it is God's word. In order for this to happen God himself must persuade the man's heart of its truth.

How can we know what is God's Word, and what is right or wrong?...You must determine this matter for yourself, for your very life depends upon it. Therefore God must speak to your heart: This is God's Word; otherwise you are undecided....Surely, a person can preach the Word to me, but no one is able to put it into my heart except God alone, who must speak to the heart, or all is vain; for when he is silent, the Word is not spoken.⁸

Here Luther anticipates in a less specific way the idea later developed by Calvin of the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit. Along with

rejecting the need for ecclesiastical proof of the authority of Scripture, Luther also threw over the traditional complex exegetical method, insisting on the literal sense of Scripture.

The Holy Spirit is the plainest writer and speaker in heaven and earth, and therefore His words cannot have more than one, and that the very simplest, sense, which we call the literal, ordinary, natural, sense.⁹

Luther oversimplified the exegesis of Scripture (he did not realize, for example, how much his exposition of Paul depended on Augustine). He opened the way for a Scriptural literalism and a Biblical monism. His insistence that each man must be persuaded of the truth of the Scripture for himself could lead to rampant individualism and sectarianism. But the Reformer himself was saved from such dangers by a third distinction, the distinction between the written documents of Scripture and the living Word of God. Although Luther assumed the inspiration of Scripture and even referred to the Holy Spirit as its author (see the quotation above), he did not emphasize it in a mechanical, fundamentalist way. What matters for Luther is the gospel, which is the living preaching, the good news about Christ.

But Gospel means nothing but a proclamation and heralding of the grace and mercy of God through Jesus Christ, merited, and procured through his death. And it is not properly that which is contained in books, and is comprehended in the letter, but rather an oral proclamation and living word, and a voice which echoes through the whole world, and is publicly uttered that it may universally be heard. Neither is it a book of laws, containing in itself many excellent doctrines, as has hitherto been held.¹⁰

What is contained in Scripture is not doctrine, as for the scholastics, but gospel, the message about Christ, who himself is the Word

of Scripture and the norm of doctrine. Thus Luther, unlike his later followers, could conscientiously admit the critical conclusions about the text of men like Erasmus and Colet.

Like Luther, Calvin maintained the primacy of Scripture; without the writings of the prophets and the preaching of the apostles the Church would never have existed. Like Luther again, Calvin recognized that the Scriptures contain a witness to Jesus Christ and not a rational system of doctrine. But Calvin's view of Scripture tended to move in a more literalistic direction. He often assumed that the Scriptures had been given by verbal dictation, that they were oracles of a divine speaker. At the same time he did not go to the extremes of literalism because for Calvin divine speech did exclude man's word. The Bible was the Word of God but it was also written by men.

But , whether God revealed himself to the patriarchs by oracles and visions, or suggested, by means of the ministry of men, what should be handed down by tradition to their posterity, it is beyond a doubt that their minds were impressed with a firm assurance of the doctrine, so that they were persuaded and convinced that the information they had received came from God.¹¹

Though there are materials for inferring that Calvin held a verbal dictation idea of the inspiration of Scripture, one must not regard this aspect of his theology apart from the rest.¹²

His most important contribution to the understanding of the Bible is his doctrine of the testimonium Spiritus sancti internum, the secret testimony of the Holy Spirit. Calvin was concerned to determine what was the basis for the authority which he wished to give Scripture in the Church. No decrees of the Church would be adequate to convince men that the Bible contained not simply the traditions of men

but the Word of God. Only the God who gave the word in the first place could convince men of that. It is because the Word of God itself speaks through the Scriptures that the Church instinctively acknowledges their authority. Moreover, the Spirit is at work not only in the writings but also in the believer illuminating him to recognize the Word of God for what it is and assuring him of its truth. Because the Scripture is the work of the Spirit of God, the Spirit alone can be a sufficient witness of its truth. Calvin believed that something more than reason was required to demonstrate the truth of Scripture:

The principal proof, therefore, of the Scriptures is every where derived from the character of the Divine Speaker. The prophets and apostles boast not of their own genius, or any of those talents which conciliate the faith of the hearers; nor do they insist on arguments from reason; but bring forward the sacred name of God, to compel submission of the whole world....This persuasion must be sought from a higher source than human reasons, or judgments, or conjectures--even from the secret testimony of the Spirit.¹³

The secret testimony of the Spirit is opposed to any rational proof of Scripture's authority; however, we should not confuse it with later ideas of purely subjective religious experience. The testimony of the Spirit is internum, not merely in the sense of occurring in the heart, but in the sense of being an authority belonging to God's Word itself as opposed to an external authority imposed by the Church. Calvin's idea of the work of the Spirit does not reduce to some nineteenth-century idea of subjective religious experience nor does it imprison the Spirit in the written documents, as some of his later scholastic followers did. He stresses the work of the Spirit in the whole life of Israel and the Church, first inspiring the writers of Scripture,

now creating and guiding the Church, now persuading the individual believer of the authenticity of the Spirit's oracles in Scripture.

Before seeing how Calvin's synthesis of the work of the Spirit in the Scripture, the Church and the individual was broken apart by Protestant Orthodoxy, we should look at still another Reformed divine, Richard Hooker. In his Ecclesiastical Polity, Hooker accepted many of the insights of Calvin while at the same time arguing against distorted Puritan concepts of Scripture. Hooker is wary of any notion of the Spirit that may lead to irrationalism, to pretended claims of divine revelation or to what he calls the childish demands that the authority of Scripture be proved by scriptural texts. Neither spiritual fanaticism nor verbal literalism will do for Hooker.

While insisting that nothing can rightly be done in the Church without the help of the Holy Spirit, Hooker wishes not to exclude the use of human reason.

In all which hitherto hath been spoken touching the force and use of man's reason in things divine, I must crave that I be not so understood or construed as if any such thing by virtue thereof could be done without the aid and assistance of God's most blessed Spirit. The thing we have handled according to the question moved about it: which question is whether the light of reason be so pernicious that in devising laws for the Church men ought not by it to search what may be fit and convenient. For this cause therefore we have endeavoured to make it appear how in the nature of reason itself there is no impediment, but that the selfsame Spirit which revealeth the things that God hath set down in His law, may also be thought to aid and direct men in finding out by the light of reason what laws are expedient to be made for the guiding of His Church over and besides them that are in Scripture.¹⁴

Far from denying all that Calvin said about the operation of the Spirit, Hooker wishes to claim the human reason as well for the Spirit's domain. Even the secret work of the Spirit must persuade a man of the truth of Scripture through convincing his reason. Furthermore, as Hooker shows, men are actually brought to the Scripture and convinced that it contains divine revelation by the tradition and authority of the Church. This too is possible because God has so ordered it and because God's Spirit works in the Church, not merely in the individual believer. Hooker insists that it is the ordinary human faculties and human history that God makes use of, and for man to use his reason in trust on God is more reliable than expecting some irrational work of the Spirit.

Protestant Orthodoxy, especially in the Reformed Churches, moved rapidly away from the more balanced interpretation of Scripture provided by Luther and Calvin. Going far beyond any idea of passive inspiration, later Protestants claimed verbal and plenary inspiration for Scripture. No real distinction between revelation and inspiration was made and not only the contents but even the very style of the writings was considered revelation itself. The end of the development was reached when the *Confessio Helvetica* (1675) stated officially a doctrine held by a number of earlier writers, that the vowel points of the Masoretic text of the Hebrew Bible were divinely inspired. The Reformed confessions, more than the Lutheran, devoted themselves to explicit exposition of Scripture in a literalistic way that lost the Reformers' dynamic view of the living word. Scripture was cited merely as proof-texts. All this was aggravated by an increasing intellectualizing which regarded the witness of Scripture

as consisting of revealed truths about God and nature.

The slogan sola scriptura meant the isolation of Scripture and the removal of it from living relationship with God, the Church and the Christian. Orthodoxy coined the absurdly externalistic formula of faith in the Scripture, "efficacia verbi divini etiam ante et extra usum." In such a strait jacket, Scripture lost all rational meaning as a word and became an idol. Abandoning Calvin's and Hooker's all-inclusive understanding of inspiration, the scholastics concentrated on the inspiration of the Bible almost to the denial of the work of the Spirit in Church and believer. They attempted to prove the authority of Scripture by citing Scripture itself. The Spirit is locked up in the Bible; the Bible limits the Spirit's operations. The human aspect of the writings is denied in order to insist on their divine origin. If it is divine revelation, then it cannot be man's work; man's word cannot be God's Word. In its majestic isolation, the Bible takes on the functions of the divine Spirit. Biblical inspiration is identified with divine revelation, and revelation is conceived as verbal communication rather than God's self-disclosure,

Karl Barth has pointed out how in Protestant scholasticism and in most forms of literalism today the Bible is regarded as an inspired book completely apart from the inspiration of the interpreting individual or church. This inspired quality residing in the text is thought of as objective in a fashion that can be proved to be present by rational arguments. Barth holds that this development dissolved the mystery of the relation of God's Spirit to Scripture and so prepared the way for liberalism's identification of the divine element in Scripture with religious and moral qualities that can be discerned in the central persons of the history.¹⁵

If the Protestant scholastics concentrated exclusively on the verbal inspiration of Scripture, the Pietists, by way of reaction, picked up the other half of Calvin's synthesis. Taking his idea of a teaching of the Holy Spirit in the heart of every Christian, the Pietists emphasized the interior nature of revelation as opposed to the external letter. Though originally consisting of groups within established churches, many of the Pietists formed into separate sects like the Schwenkfelders, Quakers, and Swedenborgians.

In the Pietist view the Scripture alone is not revelation at all. It is dark and unconvincing unless man brings to it his faith and the inner illumination of the Spirit. In a reversal of the scholastic equation of Spirit with Scripture, Pietism believes that the Spirit's real sphere of operation is the individual soul. God first reveals himself to the individual; then the individual is led to band together with other individuals who appear to have had the same experience; this collection of individuals then recognizes the Scriptures as containing examples of the same kind of experience in past ages. The Bible is in essence a record of religious experiences and exists as a means of stirring up the human conscience. It is not so much an inspired as an inspiring document. To put it another way, its inspiration consists in being a record of men of the Spirit. For the Pietists the essence of the Bible was its "religious" elements which were separated from what was considered profane or unchristian. With the rise of the nineteenth-century idea of progressive evolution, such reductionism could lead to the abandonment of the Bible itself as too primitive to inspire the spiritual life of modern man.

With its reliance on the individual experience of the Spirit, pietistic Protestantism made faith a matter of private judgment. The

norm of belief is not objective or God-given, but is in man himself. This is the origin of the notions of the worth of the individual moral experience, that the essence of religion is in the soul, and that there is a spark of divinity in every man. The experientialism of the Pietists was developed in still another way in the work of naturalistic, deist philosophers like Hobbes and Spinoza. For them the Spirit becomes the spirit of understanding. Human reason replaces spiritual illumination.

It would be a gross injustice to blame the work of the Reformers for all the aberrations of Protestantism, yet it is easy to see in their systems the seeds of later developments. The Reformers wanted all men to be able to read for themselves the record of revelation contained in the Scriptures, though, of course within the traditional schema of the Church's faith and creeds. But by the exigencies of history, they were forced to assert the absolute authority of Scripture over against the Catholic Church, and therefore in a sense over against the traditional schema. The papalists' decision to base their case strongly on the tradition caused the Reformation divines to become more exclusively Biblicist. Apart from the tradition of interpretation, unlimited individual interpretations of Scripture were possible and were not long in forthcoming.¹⁶ The antidote to this led to more and more extreme theories of inspiration and Biblical literalism in an attempt to guard the objective meaning of the written word. This tendency, combined with a legalistic and intellectualist view of revelation, led to today's position of modern conservative and fundamentalist Protestantism.¹⁷

During the nineteenth century, a strong reaction set in against the literalist and verbal inspiration theories of the scholastics.

Men like Coleridge, Matthew Arnold, F.D. Maurice and Ritschl moved toward more liberal, less authoritarian, doctrines of Scripture.¹⁸ By the end of the century a general agreement had been reached among Protestant scholars, a consensus set forth most thoroughly for the English-speaking world in William Sanday's Bampton lectures for 1893. Sanday derived his inductive view of Biblical inspiration from analysis of the consciousness of the Biblical writers. For him the typical inspiration is a prophetic phenomenon; from an understanding of prophecy one could derive an inclusive theory of inspiration.¹⁹ The prophetic "Thus saith the Lord" was a claim for a direct and absolute inspiration. By the principle of extensions this claim for inspiration, according to Sanday, was enlarged, improperly to include the whole of the Hebrew Scriptures.²⁰ Such a view is no longer tenable for Sanday. The writers, not the text itself, are inspired, and the Scripture has different degrees of inspiration depending on the inspiration of the writers. Thus the strict line of the canon disappears; some of the Apocrypha may be more inspired than some parts of the Old Testament. The inspiration of the Biblical writers is not essentially different from the inspiration of the ordinary Christian. The difference is one of degree, so that inspiration of the Scripture means all those ways in which it surpasses other literature.

Sanday's analysis of inspiration has two sides. From the point of view of the writers the theory of inspiration is an attempt to give a psychological account of what happens when God wishes to reveal something to man. From the point of view of the reader inspiration is the appeal of the Bible to the heart and conscience of men because of the elevation of its moral and religious values. Sanday believed the

prophetic claim to inspiration needed to be examined objectively and could be corroborated by three facts of history which must be attributed to the ordering of Providence. 1) The committal of the words of the prophets and apostles to writing, though somewhat an accident at the time, has in fact been the source of inspiration for the Church. 2) From the Christian point of view the inspired Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament can be considered fulfilled. 3) The right use of typology and analogy suggests a congruity between the two testaments that only could result from divine inspiration.²¹ After a look at the views of a later writer, C.H.Dodd, we shall conclude with a critique of both Dodd and Sanday.

The following discussion of Dodd is based on his earlier work, The Authority of the Bible, first published in 1928. Dodd has since then considerably modified his original stand, but the first book had a great deal of influence. Dodd's basic point is similar to Sanday's. God is the author not of the Bible but of the life of the Biblical writers; God inspires the writers not the words of the writings.²² Dodd's contribution to Sanday's analysis consists in rationalizing the concept of inspiration. To Dodd inspiration is akin to poetic perception:

We have not, of course, explained the specific quality which makes these songs great poetry, their "inspiration", but we have recorded the fact that whatever that quality may be it is not dependent on any ecstatic element in the prophecy. It is somewhere inherent in the elevation of the idea and the emotional strength of the sentiment as they exist in a mind essentially noble.²³

The authority of the Bible is the authority of religious geniuses whose inspired utterances are themselves inspiring, engendering a religious

attitude in the reader. The ecstasy and automatism associated with many of the prophets are ephemeral phenomena which do not affect the essence of their message. Because of their communion with God they had an enhanced power of insight. The real inspiration of the Bible is revealed not in psychological accounts of its production but in its effect. The test of inspiration of a passage is its value for reason and for the social and moral life of man. Because the prophets were geniuses of the religious life, their inspired intuitions still have value for today.

The value of Sanday's and Dodd's treatments lay in their doing down the old notions of verbal inspiration and literal inerrancy. They were able to admit and deal with honest Biblical criticism. With this greater flexibility, they could appreciate the human elements in the Bible, but because of a lack of historical information they tended to see the prophets and apostles as modern idealists. Their eisegesis of the prophetic message needs to be corrected by the contributions of the study of the history of religion and comparative religion.

Both writers make an unfortunate separation between what God does and what man does, and in this sense they are no better than the fundamentalists. To say that God is the author of the life of the Biblical community and not of the books may provide escape from verbal dictation theories, but it loses the really valid point which a doctrine of inspiration makes despite its drawbacks. The old doctrine of inspiration connected the Biblical documents closely to God's action in redemption; Scripture was the true witness and container of the gospel. But on Dodd's and Sanday's view, the Scripture tends to become separated from this action of God as a sort of accidental production.

A more serious drawback of Dodd and Sanday is their devotion to the liberal idea of the evolution of ever more and more refined spiritual insights as the essence of revelation. They deny to God's acts and to history any revelatory meaning. What really matters is emergent value gradually refined in the course of history. It is difficult to see what value other than antiquarian there could be in a canon of Scripture preserving obsolete morality and theology. It would be natural to provide a selection of Bible readings from the more elevated and idealized passages (as is now commonly done in churches). Sanday betrays his intellectualist bias when he states in conclusion:

What has come down to us is Revelation, i.e. a number of concrete truths contained in written books on the subject of God and religion. And they are truths because these books are the work of inspired men, so that even through the printed page there speaks the Spirit of God.²

We have yet to discover a truly balanced, historical discussion of inspiration.

CHAPTER THREE

"THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME" - THE INSPIRED COMMUNITY

I

The documents of the New Testament show us that the primitive apostolic Church was utterly convinced of its inspiration; the Holy Spirit poured out on it, was the chief constitutive factor in its life as the new Israel. The history of the early Church in the Acts of the Apostles begins with the promise of Christ after his resurrection that the disciples will receive the Spirit to empower them to witness to the Kingdom in all lands (Acts 1:5; cf. Lk. 24:49). This promise is subsequently fulfilled on the day of Pentecost in a manner that Peter interprets (Acts 2:16-21), according to the author of Acts, as the fulfillment of the eschatological prophecy of the book of Joel (Joel 2:28-29). Peter preaches baptism for the remission of sins in a way reminiscent of John the Baptist. (Acts 2:38). But this baptism has a difference, for it is also a baptism of the Holy Spirit--indeed, the very difference John himself made between his baptism and that of Jesus according to all four gospels (Mt. 3:11, Mk. 1:8, Lk. 3:16, Jn. 1:33).

The Holy Spirit is the source of the boldness of Peter before the rulers and elders (Acts 4:8), and of Stephen before the Council (Acts 7:55). The story of Ananias and Sapphira, with all its legendary hyperbole, exemplifies the total confidence of the

apostles in the Spirit's supervision of their every act. Apparently the Spirit gives Peter praeternatural knowledge to perceive the treachery to which an evil spirit, Satan, tempted the unfortunate couple. The Spirit is conferred by Peter and John on the Samaritans (Acts 8:15-17) and directs the Jerusalem Church in all its actions (such as the decision of the Jerusalem conference concerning the Gentile Christians; cf. Acts 15:28). Peter was moved by the Spirit to enter the house of a Gentile, thus breaking the law (Acts 10:19; 11:12); and according to Acts the pouring out of the Spirit even on the Gentiles prompted the Church to extend its preaching of salvation beyond the confines of Israel (Acts 11:15). Paul confers the Spirit (Acts 19:6) and makes decisions in the Spirit (Acts 19:21).

The same confidence in the presence of the Spirit so evident in the Acts occupies a place of high significance throughout the New Testament. Paul believes he possesses the Spirit of God (I Cor. 7:40) and even speaks more than others in tongues (I Cor. 14:18). Paul believed his apostleship was directly from the Lord and therefore dependent on revelation (Gal. 1:1); he also makes mention, though with some reticence and embarrassment, of special revelations which may have encouraged him in his apostolate (II Cor. 12:1-4). But his confidence in the power of the Spirit depends less on ecstatic visions than on the day to day working of the Spirit in the observable life of the Church. This is the whole tenor of his directives to the unruly Corinthians 12-14. Moreover, there is no indication that the apostle thought any of his writings came to him by inspiration or divine dictation. His manner of expression seems most labored at the very moment he is relating his visionary experience (II Cor. 12).¹ On the

other hand, Paul never has to argue with his churches about the presence of the Spirit among them but simply refers to the Spirit as the source of Christian freedom (Gal. 4:6-7; Rom. 8:14-15), as the author of all the gifts of the Church (I Cor. 12:4ff.), and the present principle of the life of Christians (Rom. 8:2).

For the gospel of John the Holy Spirit is clearly an eschatological reality. Although the Spirit descends on Jesus at the beginning of his ministry (Jn. 1:32), according to the testimony of John the Baptist, one must wait until after the resurrection for the fulfillment of the Baptist's promise that Jesus will baptize with the Holy Spirit (Jn. 1:33). The fourth gospel departs from the Synoptics in portraying Jesus as speaking often of the Holy Spirit, but it is noteworthy that the Spirit is not experienced, except by Jesus, until the resurrection. The Holy Spirit is a gift promised by Jesus in the future:

Now this he said about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive (*ἐμελλον λαμβάνετε*), for as yet the Spirit had not been given (*οὐπω... ἔτι*), because Jesus was not yet glorified (Jn. 7:39).

Before his death Jesus promises the disciples that another Counselor, the Spirit of truth, will be given them by the Father (Jn. 14:15-17, 26). Jesus will go away, but the Comforter will come (Jn. 16:7, 13). The Spirit comes as the gift of the risen Christ breathed into what would become the nucleus of the apostolic Church (Jn. 20:22).

The Johannine account clearly emphasizes the intimate connection between Jesus and the Spirit. As we have seen, Jesus himself possessed the Spirit; the Spirit was to be received by those who believe in Jesus (7:39). The Spirit will be given to the disciples

at the prayer of Jesus (14:16) and sent in the name of Jesus (14:26). His coming is dependent on Jesus' departure (16:7). His function will be to remind the disciples of Jesus' words (14:26), to take the things of the Lord and make them present to his followers (16:14-15). Finally the relationship is made as close as possible when, as we have seen, it is the risen Christ himself who imparts the promised Spirit.

From all these considerations, it seems clear that for the fourth gospel the Holy Spirit is the Church's experience of the presence of the risen Christ himself. Confirmation of this view comes from John's account of Christ's promise that though he is going away he will come again to the disciples:

A little while, and you will see me no more;
again a little while, and you will see me
(Jn. 16:16; cf. also 14:18ff.).

That promise is fulfilled by the resurrection of Christ and the coming of the Spirit, both of which for John are really one and the same. Christ's resurrection after a "little while" is the event which makes possible the presence of his Spirit in the Church; by that Spirit the disciples know the resurrection. It is possible that the "again a little while" refers to the interval before the parousia. But for John's realized eschatology that interval is the same as the time between Christ's death and resurrection. The Spirit is the witness that the eschatological age in which Christ promised to come again has already arrived.

Even if the other New Testament witnesses do not share the fourth gospel's one-stage, realized eschatology, they nevertheless provide a great deal of testimony to the close link between the Spirit

in the Church and the risen Christ. Not only Luke, but the other Synoptics witness to the Christians' confidence that Christ himself continued after the resurrection to be present among them and work in them: "I, I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Mt. 28:20). Both additions to Mark 16 contain similar passages: "and they went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them" and "Jesus himself sent out by means of them, from east to west, the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation."

Paul provides still another testimony. One shares by baptism into Christ the life of the risen Christ through the "Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead (Rom. 8:11), that is to say, "the Spirit of Christ" (Rom. 8:9). God has sent "the Spirit of his Son" into the hearts of Christians (Gal. 4:6). Oscar Cullmann provides an exegesis of I Cor. 11:23 ("For I have received of the Lord what I also delivered to you," etc.) that adds confirmation to our thesis.² Earlier exegesis assumed that Paul was claiming a special vision or revelation. But, says Cullmann, Paul, using the words "received" (*παρέλαβον*) and "delivered" (*παρέδωκα*), was referring to the historical tradition of the Church, not to a revelation. For Paul this tradition was not just a tradition of men but was *ἀπὸ τοῦ κυρίου*, because the exalted Lord himself was alive and working in the preaching and life of the Church (cf. also Col. 2:6, Rom. 15:19).

In all this discussion, there is no intent to eliminate the resurrection as a distinct event and equate it wholly to the Christian experience of the Spirit, as is the tendency of John Knox.³ Perhaps Barnabas Lindars is on the whole more accurate in seeing the Pentecost account as a third equivalent of the resurrection, developed at least

partly under the influence of the particular Scriptures used by the early Christians as prophetic witness to the resurrection (e.g., Ps. 68:19)⁴

In Acts 1:5 and 11:15, the promise of baptism with the Holy Spirit not just with water--which the Synoptics attribute to John--is cited as a word of the Lord foretelling the outpouring of the Spirit. It appears that the Acts, in order to provide dominical sanction for its portrait of the inspirited Church has transferred this saying to the risen Lord from the Baptist. The actual preaching of Jesus, as it can be reconstructed from the Synoptics, concerns not the promise of the Spirit but the inrush of the Kingdom. Apparently the Holy Spirit did not form a part of Jesus' preaching of the Kingdom of God, (the Synoptic gospels bear witness to this fact by attributing very few sayings about the Spirit to the Lord),⁵ but the Church's experience of the Spirit had already so colored the tradition that Jesus is portrayed as a man of the Spirit from the moment of his baptism (Mark) or even from his conception and birth (Matthew and Luke). Acts does not really contradict the gospel tradition about Jesus' lack of reference to the Spirit because the saying about the Spirit is a saying of the risen Christ. In contrast to the author of the gospel of John, the author of Luke-Acts, despite his strong reliance on the Spirit as the explanation of the phenomenon of the early Church, is generally faithful to the tradition of Jesus' words at this point. He limits the presence of the Spirit to the legendary nativity accounts and to the post-resurrection phase of the history.

At first it may seem difficult to find any resemblance between the teaching of Jesus about the Kingdom and the preaching of

the Church. There is surprisingly little mention of the Kingdom of God in the literature which comes from the early Church (outside the Synoptic gospels). The Church has substituted the presence of the Spirit for Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom. Yet the two realities are not in complete discontinuity. Both are eschatological phenomena: the presence of the Spirit in the Church is the anticipation of the fulfilled kingdom, one of the signs of the inauguration of the reign of God.⁶

II

Despite the far-reaching claims to possession by the Spirit made by the primitive Church, the writers of what is now our New Testament do not, with one exception, claim inspiration for their writings. They saw themselves as collectors of tradition and witnesses to a history. They certainly presume to share in the life of the Spirit-filled Church but do not speak of any special inspiration for their work as writers.

We have seen that the evangelists make no claim that their works are the product of divine inspiration. Paul makes such a claim only very tentatively and at one point (I Cor. 7:40). Like the Evangelists, he is more of a witness, an apostle, than a prophet with a message directly from God. He is a witness to Jesus Christ, and the historical nature of the revelation in Christ calls for testimony rather than for inspiration, ecstatic or otherwise.⁷

The exception is the Apocalypse of John, whose author claims that what he writes was directly revealed to him while he was in the Spirit; it is forbidden to alter even a word of this writing which claimed for itself the august name of prophecy. (Rev. 22:18-19).

The Apocalypse of John was only one of many similar writings which began to appear in the Church at the end of the first and the beginning of the second century. But its fundamentalist attitude toward itself is in marked contrast to the attitude of other writers toward their predecessors. While giving high reverence to the tradition of the words of Jesus, Matthew and Luke make comparatively cavalier use of the narrative portions and chronological sequence of Mark. Whether or not John was in any way dependent on the Synoptic gospels, the author of the fourth gospel is even less bound by the tradition of the words of Jesus, for he presumes to reformulate the whole ministry and the sayings of Jesus in the interests of a theological interpretation of his life. The full inspiration claimed by the early Church did not adhere to the written word or give that word divine authority. Only the words of Jesus had an acknowledged spiritual authority; the Church did not even forbear from adding pseudonymous writings to the authentic works of the apostles.

The primitive Church did not consider itself to be writing Scripture. The four gospels themselves were first considered witnesses to the authoritative oral tradition of the apostles about the Lord. Even as late as the middle of the second century, Papias, bishop of Hierapolis, evidently maintained this older attitude. This view of its own writings differs strongly from the Church's view of what it like Judaism called its Scriptures, the Law and the Prophets. Though Grant is correct in saying that the question of a theory of inspiration did not become important until the possessors of the Jewish Scriptures reached the Hellenistic world,⁸ nevertheless ideas of the inspiration of Scripture were already present in Palestinian Judaism and exercised

their influence upon the early Christians and even Jesus himself.

In the early history of Israel, there was no inspired canonical Scripture; indeed, the Bible as such was never the possession of Israel but only of the later post-exilic Jewish community. But ideas of inspiration are present in the scriptural records from the first, even in the J creation narrative's account of God's breathing into man. Inspiration is connected with prophecy from the beginning, as evidenced by the wandering bands of prophets in the time of Saul. Indeed the word for "prophecy" is the same root as the word meaning to be possessed or to rave (hithnabbē'). Later the notion of inspiration may have fallen into disrepute through its association with the excesses of the primitive prophetic bands. Some of the great prophets—Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah--rejected any connection with these inspired bands of prophets, but the association of the Spirit with prophecy was revived still later by Ezekiel and the prophecies of the latter part of the book of Isaiah (Isaiah 61:1). Hosea calls the prophet a "man of the spirit" (Hos. 9:7); Nehemiah knows the earlier the prophets as those through whom God warned Israel by his Spirit (Neh. 9:30).

It would be a mistake to conceive of prophetic inspiration as ecstatic; rather it was the invasion of the prophet by the divine Spirit.⁹ The common Hebrew belief in objective dreams and visions and the possibility of the capture of parts of the body by an outside power contributed to the development of the concept of invasion. The prophet believes he is not merely discovering some human truth; he is conscious of some beyond; he receives understanding when human explanation fails. The prophet claims his knowledge comes from a divine source, and his constant use of anthropomorphic language indicates the

closeness of his kinsnip with the divine Being.

The difficulty of studying divine inspiration and revelation is clear; coming from a transcendent source, they can only be studied at the point at which they touch human experience.¹⁰ It would be wrong, however, to reduce inspiration and revelation to a study of the prophetic consciousness (as H.W.Robinson did in an earlier book).¹¹ Revelation comes in the Old Testament by a number of channels. It comes through the prophets, but also through the sacral cult, the giving of the law and the explanation of the law by the priests. At a later stage in Israel's history the figure of the sage giving wisdom exercised the same function of the man of the Spirit.

It is clear that we must not look for the test of genuine inspiration in any one external or internal form of mediation, with exclusion of the rest.¹²

In the case of the prophets the inspiration is sporadic and haphazard. Beginning with Deuteronomy we notice a tendency to seek a more permanent inspiration associated with the written word. There is no longer a place for the sudden charismatic prophecy; prophecy must be tested by the traditional history of Israel.

If a prophet arises among you, or a dreamer of dreams, and gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or wonder which he tells you comes to pass, and if he says, 'Let us go after other gods,' which you have not known, 'and let us serve them,' you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or to that dreamer of dreams; for the Lord your God is testing you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. You shall walk after the Lord your God and fear him, and keep his commandments and obey his voice, and you shall serve him and cleave to him. But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has taught rebellion against the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you

out of the house of bondage, to make you leave
the way in which the Lord your God commanded
you to walk (Deut. 13:1-5).

The distrust of charismatic prophecy in Deuteronomy becomes in the Priestly Code the elimination of its possibility and the consequent view of the written word as the permanent presence in the world of the divine, revealing Spirit. A little later, when the collected prophetic books themselves became authoritative alongside the books of the Law, the idea of inspiration hardened still more. Inspiration tended to mean inerrancy. As the written books and their use in the synagogue became more and more dominant, during the exilic and post-exilic periods, the belief arose that there were no more prophets. Israel lost its faith in the present operation of the Spirit, and replaced it with inspired books. In the codification of the prophetic writings, the two formerly separate ideas of authoritative writings and prophetic inspiration came together to produce the concept of an inspired (and inerrant) Scripture.¹³

There were certainly words given to Israel by God which possessed the authority of their source--prophetic words and legal words. These were given a certain canonical status by their transmission in the sacral cult together with the recitation of the salvation history seen in stereotyped form in Joshua 24.¹⁴ Because the recitation of the salvation history made actual the revelation of God, the tradition had authority, but the notable feature of the early Israelite writings is their constant reinterpretation of the tradition. J, E, D, and P represent four reworkings of the history with little sense that their source material is inspired or inalterable.

The use of the Deuteronomic law book as the platform of the Josianic reform was a step toward solidification and canonization. Though Deuteronomy was directed to Israel as God's law at a particular moment in her history, it came more and more to be regarded as the enduring constitution of the true Israel. Deuteronomy itself was an authoritative word from God, but did not regard itself as scripture; Josiah's use and promulgation of it as the will of God was the decisive moment in the beginning of the canon.¹⁵ The Priestly Code enshrines the result of this development: possibilities of reworking the tradition cease as the law becomes absolutely, eternally valid.

Up to this point God's word had come to Israel in new historical forms; there was not a problem of interpretation and application, since the word arose out of and spoke to a specific historical circumstance. But with the "canonizing" of that word in the Torah new methods of interpretation were needed and were supplied by the rabbinic exegetes.¹⁶

Rabbinic exegesis took two different forms--the Targums and the Midrash. The Targums, the Aramaic paraphrases which originated in the synagogue, were more than mere literal translation, for they interpreted the sense of the Hebrew and sometimes added material relating the text to contemporary life and theology. The Midrashim themselves, running commentaries on the text, were much more free-wheeling than the Targums, but both originate from reflection on the Torah, originally probably in a liturgical situation for homiletical purposes. But the basic aim of all midrashic commentary was to solve the problem of the Bible itself, to make some connection between what

was contained in the book and the contemporary problems of life and theology.¹⁷

Two other schools of interpretation attempted to make the connection between the written word and the contemporary situation in other ways. The allegorical school of interpretation, influential among the Hellenized Jews who possessed the Scripture in the Greek translation of the Septuagint, adapted the method developed by Greek philosophy to interpret the ancient poets. By allegory Hellenized Jews like Philo attempted to relate the Jewish law to Greek philosophy.¹⁸

Another school of interpretation--one highly significant for Christian exegesis--has been brought to the fore by the discoveries at Qumran. This apocalyptic school of interpretation represents a more direct line from the prophets than do the rabbis. For the Qumran community, the Scripture is not a source of law but of prophecy to be fulfilled. The prophetic oracles are made to refer to a specific historical person and the circumstances connected with him, including the salvation of believers.

The presupposition of all three of these methods of interpretation is some doctrine of inspiration on account of which the Scripture, apart from its historical context and purpose, is the essential divine word. For the rabbis the writings are the divine law which must be made to fit every new situation by casuistry. For the Hellenizing allegorists the Spirit is the means by which the ancient scriptural authors foresaw in a primitive and symbolic form the wisdom of Greek philosophy. For the apocalyptic school the divine inspiration provides that prophets do far more than speak God's word to Israel at any given moment in her history; they foresee far distant events in

such a way that their words can be applied with literal exactness to their fulfillment in the present.¹⁹

The primitive Church and probably also Jesus himself shared the current Jewish belief in an inspired Scripture. Jesus attributed inspiration to David as the author of the Psalms (if Mark 12:36 is indeed a word of Jesus and not the intrusion of one of the favorite scriptural testimonies of the early Church into the mouth of Jesus.) If it is not evidence for Jesus' view of the inspiration of Scripture, it is evidence of the early Church's view, a view corroborated in Acts 1:16, 28:25. The author of Hebrews believes the Psalms were spoken by the Holy Spirit (Heb. 3:7 et pass.); the Spirit speaks in the Book of Exodus (Heb. 9:8). The passive voice is used to tag quotations instead of actually mentioning the Spirit (e.g., Heb. 3:15). Only once in the New Testament, though, is there any specific use of the word inspired (*θεόπνευστος*) to refer to Scripture, in the late work, II Timothy 3:16.

The New Testament writers never question the notion of inspiration as meaning inerrancy, but they were freed from its power by their concentration on the central historical events of the history of salvation.²⁰ The traditional understanding of inspiration is modified for the early Christians by their consciousness of standing in a new, unique position before God. Jesus himself led the way to this Christian understanding of Scripture.²¹ On the basis of his mission to proclaim the imminent coming of the Kingdom of God, Jesus asserts his authority to interpret Scripture, and more than that, to discriminate within Scripture itself between the essential and non-essential parts of the Law (as in his answer to the question about

the most important commandment--Mk. 12:28, Lk. 10:25). Here Jesus simply endorses the generally recognized essential meaning of Scripture. Elsewhere he distinguishes the original from later interpolations (his criticism of divorce--Mk. 10:2-9). At other times he even contradicts the apparent meaning of Scripture in order that the law may be truly fulfilled ("You have heard that it was said to the men of old....But I say to you"--Mt. 5:21-22, etc.).

The primitive Church, like the Qumran community we have already alluded to, interpreted the Old Testament--not only the prophetic books but also the law and the writings--as prophecy being fulfilled in its present life. In this interpretation inspiration was understood as the means by which God allowed the men of the old covenant to foresee and foretell the salvation which he would bring about in Christ.²² The fulfillment of prophecy demonstrates its inspiration, but at the same time, since the prophets are inspired, their witness to the gospel guarantees its truth.

The radical difference between Paul and the rabbinical interpreters is that Paul sees himself already standing within the new age inaugurated by the coming of the promised Messiah in Jesus. Paul stands at the end of time and interprets Scripture as a history of salvation which prepared for the present events and is now being fulfilled by them. The chief assurance to Paul that he stands in this new age is the gift of the Spirit to the Church, which he shares. For Judaism, to speak of the Spirit meant reference to the inspired Scriptures, because according to the official theory the Spirit had ceased to come to men apart from the written word since the last of the prophets. But for Paul reliance on the Spirit means a present

inspiration which gives him the ability and the freedom to discern between the Spirit and the letter of the Scriptures. The Jews, not having the Spirit (by their own admission), read the Scripture according to the letter and therefore did not understand its real meaning as a prophecy of Christ (II Cor. 3:14). The γραφή (Scripture) without the πνεῦμα (Spirit) reduces to γράμμα (the written code). The key to the true (Christian) interpretation of Scripture is the apostolic witness in the power of the same Spirit who moved the prophets to speak in the first place.

The prophets who prophesied of the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired about this salvation; they inquired what person or time was indicated by the Spirit of Christ within them when predicting the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glory. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things which have now been announced to you by those who preached the good news to you through the Holy Spirit sent from heaven (I Pet. 1:10-12).

The apostle, like Jesus a man of the Spirit, carries on the Lord's re-interpretation of the tradition with a freedom unknown under the old written code. This is possible, for the Lord himself gives his Spirit to the apostolic Church.

When a man turns to the Lord the veil is removed.
Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit
of the Lord is, there is freedom (II Cor. 3:16-17).

As R.M. Grant construes it, "Where the Lord's Spirit is, there is (exegetical) freedom."²³

III

Our examination of the New Testament evidence for the existence of the primitive Christian Church as an inspired community has discovered a far more all-embracing and at the same time freer conception of inspiration than any bequeathed to the modern Church by either conservative

or liberal theologies. In the final chapter we shall attempt to restate an understanding of Scripture which makes sense of the New Testament's witness to the presence of the Spirit in the Church as well as of the historical actuality of the Church's tradition. Before that it will be helpful to observe briefly the development of thought about inspiration in the post-apostolic Church. Two areas require attention: the adoption by Christians of allegorical exegesis of the Old Testament and the growth of an accepted list of New Testament writings eventually to become our present New Testament canon.

We have observed that the early Christians were largely freed from wooden interpretation of the Scriptures by their realization of the importance of the Old Testament as history. Instead of searching the Scriptures for precepts, moral rules or trivial coincidences in the manner of the rabbis, they looked there to discover the whole meaning of the death and resurrection of Christ. But as the early Church entered more and more into the Hellenistic world, a more hardened doctrine of scriptural inspiration began to grow and was applied first to the Jewish Scriptures and later to the documents of the gradually forming New Testament. In Hellenistic Judaism the early Christians found an already existing and highly elaborated doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture.

Jewish discussion of the Hebrew canon took place as late as 100 A.D. at a conference at Jamnia. There was no final, absolute decision about the canon of Scripture, no closing of the canon. The books of Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs were discussed and were allowed in the canon, but it was still possible for the canon to have

a fringe of undecided writings. To be accepted in the canon, the books had to be written in Hebrew and have a religious character; besides they must be able to claim a date of composition before the time of Ezra.²⁴ The reason for this, according to the Talmud, is that books written after the time of Ezra do not defile the hands; in other words they lack divine inspiration, since the Spirit ceased after the time of Ezra, according to the theory. Although the official explanation of the difference between the canonical books and others referred to their divine quality, actually historical and linguistic consideration largely entered into the decision.

It was otherwise in the world of Hellenistic Judaism. There ideas of inspiration occupied the field, and many more books than in the Hebrew canon were recognized as Scripture (our apocrypha). The Hellenistic Jews possessed a translation of the Scriptures probably originating in the third century B.C. in Alexandria. This Septuagint version was regarded as an inspired translation, as is evidenced by the Letter of Aristeas. Purporting to be an account of the miraculous accomplishment of translation of the Septuagint, it is probably a late second-century attempt to promote a newly standardized version of the Torah among Alexandrian Jews. In all probability, the Greek Bible developed like the Aramaic Targums: first oral paraphrases were made for use in the synagogue, later these were written down, finally a standard text was achieved in the Septuagint.

The Letter of Aristeas, however, succeeded in promulgating belief in a divinely inspired translation. The historian Josephus accepts the belief chiefly as assuring the historical accuracy of the Biblical narrative. Philo goes much further than Josephus in

founding an elaborate allegorical exegesis on the idea of an inspired Septuagint. Inspiration is so complete that it permits the derivation of allegorical meanings dependent on a mere peculiarity of phrasing or a punctuation mark. Allegory provided for Philo and other Greek-speaking Jews a way of reconciling their two sources of doctrine, the Jewish Law and Greek philosophy. On the one hand because of their philosophical bent, they tended to ignore the historical meaning of the Biblical narratives. History was a symbolic and somewhat primitive image of philosophical truths. On the other hand allegory was the means by which these Grecized Jews were able to maintain continuity with their heritage. In effect, they affirmed that the revelation to Israel in the past was still relevant to their new situation, because by divine inspiration the primitive Israelites had perceived the truths which philosophy later stated in another form. This allegorical garden was already prepared for the early Christians when they came into the Greek world and they lost no time in producing their own flowers there. Allegory was the method which they too adopted to solve for a time the problem of the Jewish Scriptures.

The Christian insistence on the importance of the Old Testament as divinely inspired prophecy of the Messiah met severe challenges in the Hellenistic world. The Greeks could not understand the significance of the history and were frequently repelled by its barbarism. Furthermore many did not understand why the records of the old Israel were any longer necessary under the new dispensation. Marcion put the challenge to the Church in the most drastic way. He abandoned the Old Testament and formed his own canon of the least Hebraic Christian writings to replace it. In order to combat Marcion the Church

developed a double strategy. First, insisting that one and the same God revealed himself in the Old Testament as well as in the New, it adopted the allegorical method of exegesis in order to make the Jewish writings palatable to Greeks. Second it gradually produced its own authoritative collection of writings of the New Testament.²⁵

Marcion did not provide the only catalyst for the production of the New Testament collection. The adherence of the gnostic Christians to a secret oral tradition preserved from the apostles endangered the unity and integrity of the Church's teaching. Against the gnostics the Church appealed to the authentic apostolic writings as the norm of all true tradition. In addition it maintained that the spiritual gift of the interpretation of these writings was not secret but was handed down in known succession from the apostles. The true Christian tradition was continued in the public teaching founded by the apostles. The most vigorous proponent of this teaching is Irenaeus, who claims truth is only to be found in the Church.²⁶

The nature of the Church's appeal against the gnostics brought into prominence the written form of the apostolic witness and implied the need of a recognized list of apostolic writings. The Montanist movement made the need even more pressing. Making extreme claims for their inspiration, the Montanists produced apocalyptic writings which depended on new revelations. Montanism threatened the Church's stand on the historical revelation, in Christ. To fight Montanism, Christianity could not be true to itself and simultaneously declare that the Spirit had ceased (like Judaism) and that therefore all inspiration was contained in the already existing Scriptures. For the whole testimony of the Church was that in it, once

again, the Spirit was at work and with a fullness never known in Israel. Against Montanism the Church insisted on the accepted writings as well as on the authorized ministerial succession, but it did not use the criterion of inspiration to judge which writings were authoritative and which were rejected. The Apostolic Fathers, Ignatius, Clement, Barnabas--thought of themselves as inspired in the same way as the Scriptures. Clement and Origen emphasized the inspiration of Scripture but also believed themselves inspired; with their unusual emphasis on inspiration they recognized a wider list of writings than most other authorities. The Muratorian fragment assumes inspiration as a necessary pre-condition of Scripture but does not distinguish between writings on that basis.²⁷ Not inspiration, but wide usage, apostolic authorship and agreement with orthodox teaching were the criteria by which a writing was accepted or rejected. And this is to be expected, since the question was not, Are these writings inspired?--everyone knew that the Holy Spirit was constantly at work in Christian writers and in every aspect of the Church's life--but rather, Are these writings an authentic witness to the history which produced the salvation the Church now knows in the Spirit?

The real use of a theory of inspiration of the New Testament was not as a criterion of canonicity, but as the foundation of a hermeneutical method. Inspiration meant, to the compiler of the Muratorian list for example, that the New Testament writings were more than ephemeral productions. As the work of the Holy Spirit they ought to be received and heeded by the Church in every age. A theory of inspiration of Scripture is an ex post facto development. When

the writings finally existed in a codified form, it attempted to explain why those particular writings were unique. In our last chapter we will attempt a better interpretation of their uniqueness.

CHAPTER FOUR

"RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT" - TRADITION AND THE SPIRIT

According to the gospel of John, when the Christ first appeared to his disciples after his resurrection, he breathed on them and said to them "Receive the Holy Spirit" (λάβετε πνεῦμα ἅγιον , Jn. 20:22). We have previously seen how close a connection the fourth gospel makes between the risen Lord and the Holy Spirit. The word λάβετε (receive) is the same basic stem of which the apostle Paul uses a compound form in referring to the tradition of the Lord's Supper he has received (παρέλαβον , I Cor. 11:23). The giving of the Holy Spirit, however the various New Testament witnesses recount it, is part of a continuing action, a "tradition" begun in God's delivery of his Son. Tradition starts with God and passes through Christ and the outpouring of the Spirit to the apostles and to the whole Church. Jesus Christ is the means by which God delivers himself to men. The Holy Spirit is the risen Lord's gift of his constant presence in the Church.

The apostles' testimony to the risen Christ made sense to the early Church because it knew as a whole the guiding and strengthening of his Spirit. Certainly the Spirit was from time to time associated with ecstatic phenomena and "miraculous" occurrences, yet these were not the most important proof of the Spirit's presence. Neither was it the experience of a mysterious presence of the Spirit

in the hearts of believers, though such an experience occupies a place in the New Testament. The chief foundation for the early Church's confidence in the gift of the Spirit was the actual existence and state of the Church. That in spite of all odds and disappointments, the Church was preaching a new message of salvation, was celebrating that salvation with joy in the Eucharist and that daily new members were being added to the reconstituted Israel--this was ample evidence that God's Spirit was at work in unpredictable ways. "Spiritual" phenomena were an expected, and for that age a significant, confirmation of the Church's faith in the Spirit's working. But the basis of that faith lay in the empirical fact of the Church's existence.

The same is true for us in the present age. We often tend to associate the idea of Holy Spirit with spiritualistic phenomena whose very occurrence we doubt. Even if we convince ourselves that certain unusual natural occurrences actually happened, we are not at all sure they have anything to do with the Holy Spirit. Or perhaps, under the influence of a late medieval concept of personal piety that still lingers, the work of the Spirit is connected with individual religious experiences. In our skeptical age we are no more likely to credit "religious experience" than natural miracles. Although it would be wrong through some over-rationalistic view of the universe to deny outright the possibility of extraordinary, miraculous workings of the Spirit, it is nevertheless true that the concrete visible Church is for us, as well as for the first-century Christians, the real miracle and witness of the Spirit's work. This conviction is not an obvious one. At any particular moment, the Church may give little appearance of being the temple of the Holy Spirit. The truth

of the Church's claim can only be received through the believer's participation in the living fellowship of the Church. One cannot escape the conflict with the enduring possibility that the claim may not be true.

Life in the Church is the source of the believer's conviction, for the stream of the Church's life connects him with that tradition which flows from God through Jesus Christ. On the basis of the tradition, he may discern the work of the Spirit elsewhere. In his entry into the Church he may find the Spirit's leading. To say that the Spirit dwells in the Church is to say that that particular historical organism is truly and intimately tied up with God's purpose. The Church, as the fruits of God's redeeming action in Jesus Christ, knows that through her and in her God continues to work. Therefore her esprit de corps is not self-invented but is due to God, in other words is the Holy Spirit.

The individualistic, pietistic misunderstanding of the work of the Holy Spirit has confused our interpretation of the prophets and of the whole idea of the inspiration of Scripture. The prophets ought not to be looked at in isolation from the rest of the tradition. It is true that some of them relate visionary experiences by which they received a call to the duty of prophecy. But the call is not the basis of the prophet's faith or of his message. Like all Israel the prophet receives his faith from the tradition of the fathers which testifies to God's calling of his people and their deliverance in the Exodus. The prophet never conceives his faith apart from that tradition, and his message derives from reflection on contemporary circumstances in the light of that tradition. The prophets make

sense when their several testimonies are taken as a whole and not as if each prophetic saying were a divine oracle. The individualistic view of prophecy has been aggravated by a distorted propositional view of revelation. It theorized about prophetic inspiration in order to determine just what kind of divine control was exercised over man to get truths safely down on paper.

William Temple's conception of divine illumination¹ takes a big step away from sterile, mechanical views of inspiration, but it still suffers from an unnecessary supernaturalism. In Temple's view, the possibility of understanding the tradition is given by special actions of God to illuminate the mind apart from and over and above the tradition. Without denying the possibility of special revelation, one can better understand the regular course of events in a more historical way. The faculties of the ordinary man are illuminated to receive the Christian tradition through contact with that tradition itself. To say this is not at all to deny the constant working of the Spirit in bringing men to faith, but rather to affirm it more strongly. It is to affirm that the Spirit is at work in the actual human, often "un-inspired" handing on of the gospel. In this view the human agents of the tradition and their timely reinterpretations of it are under the aegis of God's revelation. In the preaching, teaching and liturgy of the Church, God is at work because they derive from and point to the Christ whom he delivered up (*παρέδωκεν*, Rom. 8:32) for us all.

In an analogous sense we can best understand the traditional concept of the inspiration of Scripture. In its long history the concept has meant many things--from the literal inerrancy to the inspirational value of the Bible. Perhaps indeed the concept could

be best replaced by others, yet properly understood it points to an important aspect of Scripture: as the crystallized core of the Church's tradition, it ultimately derives from God's tradition, his self-delivery, and is a providential means of its continuance. To deny this completely risks spiritualizing the history of redemption and removing God from where he has put himself--in the historical life of Israel and the Church. Of recent writers the Roman Catholic theologian Karl Rahner most successfully restates the inspiration of Scripture.² Though much of his book is necessarily devoted to reconciling the Roman Church's official statements on inspiration with the progress of modern critical scholarship, he manages to skirt around the doctrinal pitfalls and make a positive reformulation. According to the official definitions the Scriptures were written in their entirety Deo auctore by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Rahner says that this divine authorship is only by analogy; it in no way denies or limits the full authorship of the human writers. An examination of the writings themselves makes this clear. The New Testament is a manifestation of the common life of the Church. It witnesses to the developing faith of the Church as well as to the revelation. In fact it is just in this witness to the Church's faith that the New Testament is a vehicle of revelation. God is the author of Scripture in the sense that he is the Originator of the Church and the Principle of her life.

A writing may be called inspired if it shows itself to be an accurate expression of the life of the Church. On this basis the primitive Church recognized the writings we now have in the New Testament, because they agreed with what it most surely knew about itself.

The writings were authoritative because they gave a record of God's establishing of his Kingdom and a declaration of the final goal of the divine purpose. As such they became agents of the Church's work of tradition and in time of controversy and doubt about true doctrine the indispensable rule by which the Church could remain true to itself. So, at a much later date, the Reformers, whatever their own words, in appealing to the Scriptures were appealing to the uncorrupted tradition of the whole Church. So too, the present movements for reunion seek the recovery of the wholeness of tradition, and hence the renewed interest in Biblical studies.

The notion of the authority of the Bible is still more confused than the concept of inspiration. The schisms in Christendom have produced a situation in which, on the one hand individuals are authorities unto themselves through a supposed right of private judgment, and on the other hand churches have absolutized notions of authority in a vain attempt to guard the integrity of Scripture against aberrations. No longer, however, can the old concepts of authority stand. Criticism challenges all other authorities. Historicism disallows any absolutizing of historical traditions. Yet we still see books published on "the authority of Scripture."³ To say that the Bible has authority is simply to say that it is true and accurate. With regard to this point the fundamentalists were right in their controversies with the liberals: the truth of the Bible is not some spiritual reality to be allegorized out of it but depends on the accuracy of its witness to a history. The fundamentalists erred in the absolutism and materialism of their views. The truth of the Bible cannot be vindicated by theories of inspiration or assertions of its divine authority but by

the Church's critical consideration of its testimony with the aid of human reason.

This rational view of the authority of the Bible is more in accord with the actual process of canonization of the Scriptures than any other notion. The early Church received and read the Scriptures, not because they were especially inspired documents (though no one would have denied their inspiration) but because they were the authoritative (because earliest and most accurate) record of its beginnings. There is a tendency to absolutize the place of the canon in even the most sophisticated interpreters (e.g., Cullmann). But there is no need to erect the canon as an absolute or find some theological principle for its existence. We have the canon in fact. Whatever the reasons for its coming into being or whatever men may have thought about it in the past, it is simply all the authentic records we have of the earliest beginnings of the Church. It is a witness and guide where we attempt to find out what happened to initiate the community of which we two thousand years later are still a part. In times less historically conscious and adept, the canon may have served a more indispensable function. Had it not had a theological doctrine of the place of the apostolate and the unique authority of their writings, the Christian tradition could have been so distorted as to be unrecognizable. At present, historical, critical scholarship provides something of a replacement for the inviolable authority of the canon. Criticism presumes to break down the canon and evaluate on its own terms the validity and accuracy of its component documents. We can think we are justified in doing so by the very process of canonization itself: the arguments on which the canon was established were

in principle historical arguments, even if incorrect in some of their conclusions (about which writings were apostolic). For the canon was established not on the basis of the inspiration of the writings (as if they had some supernatural authority) but on the basis of apostolicity and agreement with the received teaching of the apostolic churches. The apostles were the ones who possessed accurate knowledge of the seminal history of the Church. If we have better means of finding out the actual history than a literalist submission to the canon, we should use them.

On the other hand, the canon of Scripture ought not simply to be scrapped or disregarded. Form criticism has demonstrated the folly of the modern Marcions who looked to find the historical Jesus by filtering him out of the apostolic suspension. We are inescapably dependent on the particular New Testament interpretation of the history of Jesus for all we know about him. Criticism cannot invent a person who is not there (the tendency of nineteenth-century liberalism); it has to begin by a clear delineation of the true nature of the New Testament witness to Jesus and then attempt to figure out why it is so. Revelation occurs, after all, not in propositions or in bare occurrences, but in the human reception of events, in this case, in the apostolic interpretation of the history of Jesus of Nazareth. Bultmann's disregard for the canon is based on his mistaken notion of what is fundamental in the New Testament. He believes that essentially it contains the true self-understanding of man. Since some of the writings contain this self-understanding and some do not, and since some Christian writings not in the canon do contain it (e.g., The Shepherd of Hermas), the line drawn by the canon matters little.

The true Christian self-understanding of man can be recognized without reference to the canon. Like Luther's dismissal of the Epistle of James and the Apocalypse, Bultmann's criticism of the canon misses the point. The New Testament is important not for the truth of its doctrine, even if that doctrine be justification by faith or the existential self-understanding of man, but for the combined force of its many different witnesses to the power of the Christ-event.

A more rational approach to the question of canon is feared by many Protestants who think that any reduction in its authority will lead to the sort of unjustifiable developments exemplified in the recent papal dogmas, or else to the virtual abandonment of the faith instanced by the more extreme forms of liberalism. It is a curious coincidence that both the liberal Protestants and the traditional Roman Catholics appeal to a principle of development in order to solve the problem of the difference between what is contained in Scripture and the actual faith of the Church in any later age. For the liberals there is a development of more refined moral and spiritual insights, for the Romans the evolution of dogma implicit in Scripture and the development of the sensus plenior of the text. Against them both, Protestant conservatives absolutize the canon as the only source of all teaching and all "truths of revelation." Both sides of the fence are partly right and partly wrong. The liberals and the Romans see clearly that there is indeed a difference between our age and the Biblical world, but the solution they offer is the wrong one and risks betraying the historical origins of the faith. We need a development of doctrine but one that expresses truly the effects of the history. An almost fatalistic devotion to development, especially among the Roman Catholics, prevents any repristination by the original. The conservative Pro-

testants, on the other hand, are right to point their brethren toward the Scriptures and say, "Look, here is what Scripture is really saying, not what you make it mean." But they are wrong in regarding Scripture as a source of doctrines instead of a historical witness.⁴

It is distressing at this point to observe tendencies in liberal Roman Catholicism to produce a modern Biblicism. More and more, men like Tavard and Congar are emphasizing the sufficiency of Scripture for all doctrine, the completion of all revelation in the apostolic period and the disappearance of all authentic tradition except what is contained in Scripture. As much as one must applaud the motives of these men and appreciate their fear of whither unchecked mariological developments might lead, one feels that in the long run an uncritical Biblicism is just as dangerous. Nor will this use of the Scriptures by the Romans improve communication with the Protestants. Ironically just at the time when the papalists are ready to admit much of what the Reformers alleged about Scripture, the critical historical analysis of the Bible has thrown a new obstacle in the way.

Rightly understood, tradition must be related to eschatology. Tradition, beginning with God's handing over of his Son to men, has a purpose and a goal. The goal of God's tradition is the eschatological Kingdom. The Messiah is sent not to draw man back to a paradise of the Golden Age, but to lead him forward into the Kingdom of the last days. The inauguration of this Kingdom is marked by the preaching of Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. True tradition is precisely the opposite of traditionalism, for it is a going out of the past to meet the future. In this regard, the common way of referring to Jesus as the final revelation of God can be very misleading. If the final

revelation has already taken place, then all subsequent history is really meaningless except as a stage for its unchanging repetition. The Church becomes a meteorite plunked down out of the past in an inexplicably extended end of time.⁵ The end of all history, realized eschatology with a vengeance, becomes the basis of a too precise doctrine of church infallibility.⁶

As a matter of fact the Church has endured through a history of two thousand years. During that time new elements which arrive in the course of the historical process are integrated into the life of the Church; there is after all a doctrinal development. Is to say this simply an accommodation of our faith to the delay of the parousia and an admission that we do not really hold the same faith as the Biblical writers? Though there is no easy solution to the theological problem of the delay of the eschaton, I do not think we are forced to make such an admission. No doubt the early Christians believed that final salvation was all but accomplished and that the end was near at hand. We now know they were wrong on that score, but we share the source of their conviction with them. The early Church was convinced of the imminent end because of the signs of the Spirit's working which they saw all about them. They did not believe that God's work of salvation had stopped at some imaginary date of Jesus' departure from the earth; it was going on every day in the fellowship of the Church. In the Church's life Jesus' healings, exorcisms and forgiveness of sins were still taking place.⁷ That same Church today still knows the carrying out of God's saving work; it is just a little wiser about the full meaning of getting men ready for the Kingdom of God.

On such a view of the Church's continuing history we can summarize our view of Scripture, tradition and inspiration. The purpose of bothering about a canon of the Scriptures becomes clear: the events recorded there and only there are constitutive of the history--in fact, they produced it and beyond that give meaning to it. The Scriptures point to Christ as the source and the point of the continuum. Tradition provides the instrumentality by which the Scriptures have meaning for us today--not by the repetition of the letter but by the continuity of the history. In the fullest sense tradition becomes part of the on-going sacred history and is therefore part of God's action of salvation.⁸ Thus we return to our conviction of the inspiration of the Spirit in every aspect of the Church's life, the Spirit at work in the Church's tradition. To make a claim about the Bible as Scripture is only possible within the community of Spirit, the Church whose history and institutions flow from the events recorded in its Scriptures. The inspiration of Scripture consists in nothing other than its witness to the inspirited life of the Christian community.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER ONE

- 1 The Living Church, Vol. 146, No. 14(April 7, 1963), p. 11.
- 2 Unfortunately it is not possible to compare the Vatican schema on revelation, for it has not yet been released. But the change of the title from "On the Sources of Revelation" to "On Revelation" gives one the right to expect much that is changed from the traditional post-Tridentine Roman position.
- 3 Jenkins, Daniel, Tradition and the Spirit, p. 22.
- 4 Cf. Tavard, George H., "The Holy Tradition," in Dialogue for Reunion, ed. L. Swidler, p. 56: "The principle of Scripture alone was one of the main grounds on which Luther first, and then the other Reformers, particularly Calvin, argued with the Catholic theologians defending the traditional statements of the faith. It is important to realize what idea made Luther deny absolute value to the Church's Tradition. The Reformers certainly did not deny it all authority. They referred to the Fathers of the Church, particularly to St. Augustine, quite frequently, which they would not have done had they considered these of no authority. But the main point which Luther had in mind at the disputation of Leipzig when he denied the absolute authority of ecumenical councils, was that the Church always lies under the judgment of the Word of God." See also Congar, Yves, Vraie et Fausse Réforme dans l'Eglise, p. 482ff.
- 5 Stendahl, Krister, "Biblical Theology, Contemporary," The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Volume I, p. 418.
- 6 Cf. Pelikan, Jaroslav, "Overcoming History by History," in The Old and the New in the Church, World Council of Churches Commission on Faith and Order, p. 36.
- 7 Cf. Tavard, "The Problem of Tradition Today," The Ecumenist, Volume I, No. 3(February-March 1963), p. 35, for evidence of a change in viewpoint in the Roman communion also: "Tradition is not, as it appears in the manual presentation, a static locus to which we turn for references, just as Scripture is not a static datum filled with arguments to prove doctrines and refute heresies. Scripture is the record of the manifestation of the Word and, by the same token, is a manifestation of the Word today."
- 8 Cf. Stendahl, "The Apocalypse of John and the Epistles of Paul in the Muratorian Fragment," in Current Issues in New Testament Interpretation, ed. W. Klassen and G.F. Snyder, p. 243: "It was not until the red ribbon of the self-evident had been tied around the twenty-seven books of the New Testament that 'inspiration' could serve theologians as an answer to the question: Why are these books different from all other books?"

- 9 Cf. Tavad, Holy Writ or Holy Church, pp. 3-11.
- 10 Denzinger, Enchiridion, 783 (Eng. tr., R.J. Deferrari, 1957).
- 11 "The Problem of Tradition Today," The Ecumenist, Vol. 1, No.3 (February-March 1963), pp. 33-34.
- 12 Geiselmann, "Scripture, Tradition, and the Church: An Ecumenical Problem," in Christianity Divided, ed., D.J. Callahan et al., pp. 47-48.
13. Ibid., p. 44.
- 14 Cf. Newman, An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine, p. 323 et pass. In a footnote on p. 323 he acknowledges his acquaintance with Palmer's views.
- 15 Cf. Baum, Gregory, That They May Be One, p. 91.
- 16 Congar, p. 527.
- 17 Baum, p. 121.
- 18 Geiselmann, p. 42.
- 19 Congar, p. 488.
- 20 Geiselmann, op.cit., p. 61.
- 21 Skydsgaard, Kristen Ejner, The Old and the New in the Church, p. 21.

CHAPTER TWO

- 1 Denzinger, 2293.
- 2 Ibid., 706.
3. Ibid., 1950-51.
- 4 "Providentissimus Deus," Ibid., 1952.
- 5 Ibid., 2292.
- 6 Cf. Voegelin, Eric, Order and History, Vol. I, p. 367.
- 7 Kerr, Hugh Thomson, ed., A Compend of Luther's Theology, p. 15.
- 8 Ibid., pp. 11-12.
- 9 Ibid., pp. 18-19.
- 10 Ibid., p. 9.
- 11 Kerr, H.T., ed., A Compend of the Institutes of the Christian Religion, p. 14.
- 12 For further discussion of Calvin's views on verbal dictation, see J.K.S. Reid, The Authority of Scripture, p. 34ff; cf. also J.D. Smart, The Interpretation of Scripture, p. 194 ff.
- 13 Kerr, op.cit., p. 16.
- 14 Hooker, Ecclesiastical Polity, Book III, 9.
- 15 Smart, pp. 193-94.
- 16 Cf. Dodd, C.H., The Bible Today, p. 20.
- 17 E.g., Klaas Runia's recent book, Karl Barth's Doctrine of Holy Scripture.
- 18 Cf. The Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. VIII, p. 49.
- 19 Sanday, Inspiration, Third Edition, p. 128.
- 20 Ibid., p. 263ff.
- 21 Ibid., pp. 402-06.
- 22 Dodd, The Authority of the Bible, Revised Edition, p. 39.
- 23 Ibid., p. 72.
- 24 Ibid., p. 125.
- 25 Sanday, p. 430.

CHAPTER THREE

- 1 Cf. Richardson, Alan, Christian Apologetics, p. 207.
- 2 Cullmann, Oscar, The Early Church, pp. 59-75.
- 3 Knox, Jesus Lord and Christ, p. 266.
- 4 Lindars, New Testament Apologetic, pp. 51-59.
- 5 One of the few sayings of Jesus about the Spirit that appears in all three Synoptics, the condemnation of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (Mk. 3:28 Mt. 12:31, Lk. 12:10), shows the seriousness with which the Church regarded the presence of the Spirit. To deny the Spirit was apostasy. cf. Barrett, C.K., The Holy Spirit and the Gospel Tradition, pp. 100-08.
- 6 Ibid., pp. 157-162.
7. Grant, R.M., The Letter and the Spirit, p. 57.
- 8 Ibid., p. 31.
- 9 Robinson, H.W., Inspiration and Revelation in the Old Testament, p. 182.
- 10 Ibid., p. 173.
- 11 The Christian Experience of the Holy Spirit, p. 141.
- 12 Robinson, Inspiration and Revelation, p. 271.
- 13 Hebert, A.G., The Authority of the Old Testament, p. 183.
- 14 Weiser, Artur, The Old Testament: Its Formation and Development, p. 87; Robinson, Inspiration and Revelation, p. 205.
- 15 Von Rad, Gerhard, Old Testament Theology, Vol. I, p. 75.
- 16 Cf. Robinson, Inspiration and Revelation, pp. 133-34: "Finally, we note that the literary record of history eventually assumes a new objectivity in becoming canonical and authoritative. As such it replaces the prophecy from which it drew its interpretation. The change from an oral to a literary revelation is influential in many ways, but chiefly because it introduces a certain fixity into the idea of revelation which did not attach to its original form of prophetic utterance. Revelation becomes static instead of dynamic. Both Jew and Christian have had to introduce the idea of a new interpretation, an oral tradition, administered by synagogue or Church, in order to make the written revelation applicable to the needs of successive generations, and in so doing have often abandoned the historical meaning, whether for devotional or dogmatic ends. But graver still is the loss of that sense of dynamic which belongs to the original prophecy, the sense of divine purpose at this moment in operation and of a real continuity between the prophetic oracle and ourselves. The New Testament recovered this in its doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and where this is lost there can be no vital revelation of the living God."¹⁷
- 17 Vermes, G., Scripture and Tradition in Judaism, p. 8ff.
- 18 Grant, R.M., op.cit., pp. 31-40.
- 19 For farther discussion of developments in the intertestamental period of Judaism, see Vermes, op.cit.; Hebert, op.cit., pp. 165-198, Grant, op.cit., pp. 31-40.

- 20 Hebert, op.cit., p. 235.
- 21 Cf. Dodd, According to the Scriptures, p. 110.
- 22 Cf. especially Hebrews 11, where all the men of Israel are portrayed as looking ahead to the promised salvation; the author even goes so far as to say of Moses, "He considered abuse suffered for the Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he looked to the reward" (Heb. 11:26).
- 23 Grant, op.cit., p. 51.
- 24 Hebert, p. 190; for further discussion, see Weiser, pp. 331-47.
- 25 Cf. Knox, Marcion and the New Testament; for other views, see F.W. Beare, "Canon of the New Testament," The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Vol. I, p. 525ff.
- 26 Grant, The Bible in the Church, p. 57; R.P.C. Hanson, Tradition in the Early Church, p. 25.
- 27 Stendahl, "The Apocalypse of John and the Epistles of Paul in the Muratorian Fragment," in Current Issues in New Testament Interpretation, ed. Klassen and Snyder, p. 243.

CHAPTER FOUR

- 1 Cf. Nature, Man, and God, pp. 309-12.
- 2 Inspiration in the Bible, p. 48ff.
- 3 E.g., J.K.S. Reid's The Authority of Scripture.
- 4 Grant, R.M., The Bible in the Church, p. 162.
- 5 Cf. Jenkins, Daniel, Tradition and the Spirit, p. 30.
- 6 The traditional doctrine of infallibility fastens on an important truth regarding the Christian gospel. In Christ God has acted in a new, decisive and unrepeatable fashion that conditions all subsequent history. God's purpose in Christ will not fail. The common Protestant argument against infallibility by the analogy of God's rejection of Israel disregards the essence of the New Covenant as fulfillment and tends to deny that God has really acted decisively in Christ. On the other hand, the Roman doctrine of infallibility misses the point in reducing the indefectibility of God's purpose in the Church to a guarantee of doctrinal inerrancy.
- 7 Cf. Robinson, James M., The Problem of History in Mark, pp. 54-67.
- 8 It is at this point that Cullmann, G.E. Wright and Barth go wrong. Cullmann, for all his interest in history and his accurate description of the Biblical historical world view, is still looking in the Bible for a doctrine of history which he can apply to the present situation. Wright thinks the distance between ourselves and the Bible is bridged by our putting ourselves in the shoes of the Biblical characters. Wright says so much that is true, but his emphasis on "Biblical theology" tends to take him out of history. He does not answer the question, "Why a Biblical theology?" (God Who Acts, p. 107). Barth is on the right track in claiming the Scripture is meaningful today because the contents are the same as ever but veers off when he says it is because the subject transcends history. All three miss the connection provided by history itself. Cf. Stendahl, "Biblical Theology, Contemporary," Interpreter's Dictionary, Vol. I, pp. 420-22.

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